



# Newsletter

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[www.yacwag.org.uk](http://www.yacwag.org.uk)

## Cobthorn Reserve - a Space for Bats Forever

There are only about 12,000 Greater Horseshoe Bats in the UK - and that is the largest population of them anywhere in the world. It is amazing that several hundreds of them live close to Congresbury.

Their lives depend on being able to feed near to where they have their young. They need access to cattle-grazed farmland containing large numbers of night-flying insects like beetles and moths. That is what YACWAG is going to provide in its new reserve off Cobthorn Way, Congresbury.

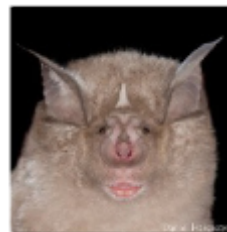
Strongvox, the developer, has built a new estate over farmland where these rare bats hunted for food, so North Somerset Council, as part of the planning process, required them to set aside part of the site for bats.

YACWAG will become the owner of this land and it will be managed forever to provide good habitat for bats, especially the rare Greater Horseshoe Bats that have a maternity roost nearby.

These bats love small fields with tall hedges so during the winter planting season will be creating the conditions they need. If circumstances permit we hope we will be able to involve members in some tree planting and show you the site.



\*Daniel Hargreaves



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*YACWAG is grateful to Daniel Hargreaves for his help and support with the project.*

PHOTOS, ARTICLES AND ANYTHING ELSE OF INTEREST are always welcome for the YACWAG newsletter, and your feedback is appreciated.

Please contact the editor at [yacwag@gmail.com](mailto:yacwag@gmail.com).

## Cobthorn Reserve - a Space for Nature

YACWAG has been waiting and watching the field off Cobthorn Way, and although the paperwork is not quite complete, we obtained permission to start managing the site in July ahead of the land transfer.

Information signs have been erected, focusing on the importance of the site for bats, and directing walkers to the local footpaths. Strongvox had already planted a lot of hedging (some of which has not survived the hot, dry weather, but a surprising amount has.) YACWAG will be planting more trees and hedging, putting in fencing to protect the hedges and also putting up a barn owl box during the winter. A water supply to each of the three field compartments will be laid on as soon as possible but in the meantime we are grateful for the help of Jo and Andy Millward, whose Dexter cattle will be happily providing the essential foodstuff for the dung beetles that are so important for the bats, and Jo and Andy will be keeping them provided with water. San Miguel the bull will be looking after some of his young ones in the fields during the summer, making it even more important that dogs are kept out of the fields.

The huge benefit to local people is that Cobthorn Reserve will be managed for bats 'forever' and will not be built on. YACWAG's vision is for a mini-landscape of small field compartments with tall hedges and trees managed to provide the insects that the horseshoe bats need. As well as dung beetles it is hoped to provide the right conditions for cockchafers and other large prey, as well as plenty of food plants and nectar sources for moths.

Although the objective is to manage the reserve for the specific needs of the Greater Horseshoe bats, what is good for them will also be good for a whole range of wildlife. Some people are sorry to lose 'their' dog-walking field, but the public footpaths remain open and YACWAG has to keep its reserves private to give nature a space.



*Spring in Cobthorn 'Reserve-in-waiting' 2021*



*Summer in Cobthorn 'Reserve-in-waiting' 2021.*



## National Moth Night - 8-10 July

This year National Moth Night had the theme of 'Wetlands and Reedbeds' so it seemed the ideal time for YACWAG volunteers to get a mercury vapour moth trap out into the wild and see what could be found and contributed to the national records.

Moth traps are specially designed so that moths attracted to the bright light (in this case powered by electricity from a generator) are caught in the trap. They generally settle down comfortably on the cardboard egg boxes provided and can be identified and counted before being safely released.

It didn't quite work like that down in a small field off the Strawberry Line. The moths were certainly attracted to the light but many of them were not bothering to go in the trap, they were perfectly happy sitting on the ground near the trap, or on the outside of the trap, or even on Higgy.

YACWAG is grateful to Bob, Tony, Higgy and James for their help in trapping the moths and recording them, and especially to Higgy for his photographic record. From the south side of Yatton 37 species of moth were recorded in two hours, while Higgy's all-night trap on the north side of the village produced 43 different species.



Moth photos L-R by Higgy - Swallowtail, Smoky Wainscot and Small Rufous. The Small Rufous is very much a wetland species as its caterpillars feed on jointed rush, sometimes soft rush. The moth on Higgy's jacket was one of 8-10 elephant hawk moths that dropped by.

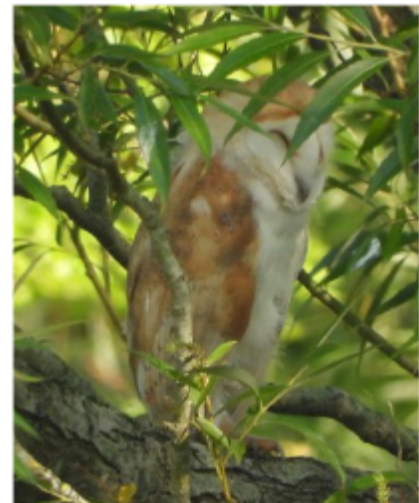
## Barn Owl and Kestrel Breeding Success



Chris Sperring MBE of the Hawk and Owl Trust came along in early July to ring the barn owl chicks raised in one of the YACWAG boxes. This year a pair of kestrels raised four young in one of our Congresbury Moor boxes - an excellent outcome in a poor year for the species. The other boxes were occupied by stock doves and single barn owls apparently not in the mood for breeding. There were five healthy young owlets in the box in Nortons. All but the smallest one were ringed by Chris under licence from the BTO, for which we are very grateful. We don't often get any information back from the rings, but there is always a chance that one might be recovered. From around sixty birds ringed on our land two rings have been recovered: one owl was found dead at Westonzoyland and one was a road casualty on the M5. Unfortunately barn owls fly low when hunting and crossing roads and this makes them vulnerable to fast moving traffic.

With young owls and young kestrels to feed, and hay or silage having been already cut in most of the fields surrounding them, YACWAG has decided to postpone hay cutting and grazing on our land to continue providing the resident raptors with the small mammals they need. The parents of these families will be looking for almost 20 voles a day, and although they will eat other small mammals, the short-tailed field vole is out and out the favourite prey.

Although adult birds go further afield to hunt, when they are feeding chicks in the nest they conserve their energy by hunting nearby, so we don't want the supply to dry up before they have seen their young ones safely to adulthood.



*Barn owl roosting in willow tree,  
Photo courtesy of Mark Savage*

# Phones Drones and Bird Reports

## YACWAG Goes to the Movies

YACWAG's web and graphic designer, Mark Stanford, has been exceptionally busy in the past 12-18 months. It began last summer with the necessity to revamp the YACWAG website, primarily so that it worked well on mobile devices. This meant rebuilding the entire 40 or so page site, and was a good opportunity to update the content on many pages. More recently Mark has created our very own YACWAG YouTube channel where you can find our excellent series of informative online talks.

Furthermore, we are working towards making short videos to showcase our work and provide an online educational resource, both on our website as well as YouTube channel. Thanks to aerial videos of our reserves using drone technology kindly donated by Peter Speight, we now have some stunning films and stills of our reserves appearing more regularly online. These all enhance the website both to entertain and inform people about our reserves and their place in the wider landscape. Even if you can't get to visit them in person, you can now get a better sense of the space from the comfort of home.

Another new development on the website is a library section where you can find all our videos and other items talks and other media such as a link to a growing number of photos taken on our reserves. The online Zoom talks held earlier this year are now also available for viewing in the library. Besides editing these videos, Mark has created a YACWAG identity/introduction and tailpiece for the films and it is guaranteed to make you smile.

YACWAG's administration has been undergoing a complete overhaul and Mark has helped by re-designing and simplifying the website's online membership process, so joining and renewal can both be done quickly and easily. We are sorry if anyone has been inconvenienced in the past few months by any changes but we are confident that our membership process will be streamlined and quick once it is fully running.

Mark has also been busy setting up new dedicated email accounts for the executive committee, for example you can now contact our Secretary Chris Moore on [secretary@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:secretary@yacwag.org.uk) and all membership enquiries will now go to Viv French at [membership@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:membership@yacwag.org.uk). Our 'bird man' Trevor Riddle also benefits from a dedicated email address: [birds@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:birds@yacwag.org.uk). More new email addresses may follow! By using the organisation's domain name in the email address we think it not only looks more professional, but keeps all YACWAG related email in-house so key YACWAG volunteers will no longer have to use their personal email accounts.

## The Return of Trevor's Bird Reports

We were aware that many members were disappointed when the weekly emailed bird reports ceased in May but are pleased to announce that Mark has found a solution we hope you are happy with. Previously the reports were written by Trevor, and then circulated by email along with any members' photos that had been submitted. These were probably read once with interest and then understandably deleted to make space, or are still lingering somewhere deep down in an email inbox! The new arrangement is





for Trevor to write his monthly blog which gets published immediately on the website. The main advantage of this is that all his articles will remain on the website for future reference and Trevor's hard work doesn't get lost to the ether. Furthermore those who are interested will always know where to find them. As ever, Trevor is keen to receive your local bird observations and photos. If you let him know you are happy for your photo to be published on the website there's a good chance it will be included in his article. Remember to use his new email address [birds@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:birds@yacwag.org.uk).

If you haven't yet visited the updated website, you will also find a new monthly blog post written by Meriel Harrison. Meriel is a newcomer to Yatton as well as to YACWAG but she has quickly found her niche (or actually more than one!) and is making a huge contribution to YACWAG's work. Meriel has a wealth of knowledge she is keen to share, and is currently Nature Policy Officer at RSPB Cymru and before that she was a Senior Policy Office for National Parks England. Don't miss reading her informative and up-to-the-minute blogs on our website. You can find both Trevor's bird blog and Meriel's postings via the website's News page.



### And finally

We intend to continue to develop and grow the website and our online presence as it is an increasingly important tool for communication, so please keep an eye on developments. We sincerely hope you welcome all these changes and improvements and always welcome your feedback and suggestions.

And just in case you think our in-house designer has been a bit slack, Mark has created an attractive new information board which is attached to the fence on the public footpath north of our Stowey reserve for all by-passers to see. This is a collaborative effort and incorporates Meriel's catchy Stop, Look, and Listen title, along with one of Tony's breath-taking wildlife photos. To make the sign tech-friendly a QR code was added to link to our website when it's viewed using a smartphone's camera.

# STOP, LOOK & LISTEN

Please take a quiet moment to see and hear the special wildlife that lives here.

You are standing with your back to Westmead Rhyne, an ancient watercourse, and looking into YACWAG's Stowey Reserve, a Local Wildlife Site designated by North Somerset Council in 2006. The reserve provides a space for nature to flourish.



Yellow Loosestrife Bee on Yellow Loosestrife flower

Share your sightings with us by tagging #yacwag on social media. You can find out more about YACWAG and our local nature reserves at [www.yacwag.org.uk](http://www.yacwag.org.uk) or use your smartphone to simply scan the QR Code.









Yatton & Grogginsbury Wildlife Action Group  
registered charity no. 1076982



Please do not allow dogs to enter these fields at any time.

## Living with Wild Neighbours - Dragonflies

*Tony Moulin starts a new series on life in the garden with his successful new pond.*

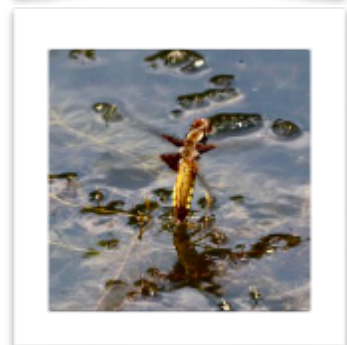
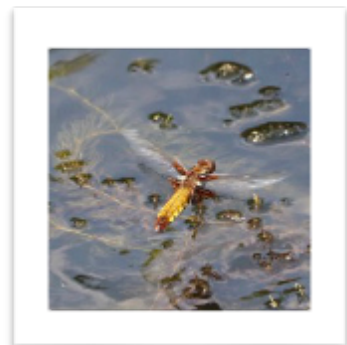
Garden ponds never disappoint and, for us, living in a wetland area there will always be a surprise. We have had a wildlife garden pond (no fish) for over 35 years and it has proved a lifesaver - particularly for amphibians donated by neighbours who were filling in their ponds during this time. It also has been a useful service station for birds like Heron and on one occasion Kingfisher to find a tasty meal.

Last year we were faced with the problem of replacing a leaky pond liner. We also wanted to reprofile the pond with more shallow areas. It was difficult timing this exercise. Generally it has to be done in the autumn and before the annual arrival of frogs sometime in January. (You can of course establish a new pond at any time). Our pond had developed its own eco system over ten years and we were reluctant to set about this destructive exercise. A few years ago we had installed a small preformed pond discarded by a friend. It is very small and there was no way it could act as a temporary home for the displaced wildlife. We estimated we would need several weeks to complete the project which involved not only securing a new liner during lockdown but also 36 bags of sand to reduce its depth. There was also the problem of removing Canadian pondweed. Never use this! Best to obtain sustainably sourced native hornwort from another pond-owner. The solution to rehoming wildlife was the purchase of two paddling pools (now suitably rehomed). The painstaking transfer took several days in cold January weather. Decontaminating the Canadian pondweed took many more.

Of particular interest was the recovery of over 50 dragonfly larvae of several species including an Emperor. The new pond has been a great success during the spring for bathing starlings and our local colony of house sparrows. I was delighted one June morning to find the exuvia (*empty larval case*) of the Emperor dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) which had safely survived the icy winter, rewarding all our efforts. Recently it has been the Broad-bodied chaser (*Libellula depressa*) that grabbed my attention one morning in mid July. As the common name implies this species has an unmistakable wide body unlike the pencil-like hawker dragonflies. The female is several shades of yellow and both male and female have distinctive basal wing patches. It is often found over newly created waters so obviously was giving the thumbs-up to the refurbished pond. Normally she would have been accompanied by a male to ward off other suitors. Fortunately she was determined to leave her mark and I had time to fetch my camera to record her fascinating behaviour as she darted to and fro dipping her body tip into the water near vegetation. The eggs will hatch within 2-3 weeks and will spend between 1-3 years as a larva (nymph). Roll on a week and a quick sideways glance at the smaller pond revealed a newly emerged Broad-bodied Chaser which just goes to show that even the smallest of ponds can support these beautiful and extraordinary insects.

Why not construct a small pond during the summer holidays?

*Tony*





## Yatton Station Garden - a Haven for Bees



The photo above was taken by the famous railway photographer, R.C.Riley in 1953 (reproduced by permission). It shows the garden on Platform 1 of Yatton station in its heyday, when British Rail workers followed the GWR tradition and kept it at competition standard in their own time. This photo inspired a millennium project to restore the 'lost garden' of Yatton and YACWAG members have been involved from the start, several continuing for over 20 years.

The garden falls outside the station area leased by GWR and the volunteers find themselves bound by both Network Rail and GWR safety protocols, which are stringent. Covid19 has added another layer of difficulty but the garden, although untouched for several months, has continued to give train users and local people a splash of colour and beauty. The south facing bank along the station approach is very warm and dry, providing ideal conditions for bees.

A colony of ash mining bees and several other species can be seen in the spring. The needs of insects are considered when choosing plants for the garden.

The volunteer gardeners will be working again on Monday mornings during August and would welcome new people who enjoy gardening. Dates can be found on the YACWAG website calendar, or ring to discuss on 01934 834889.





# Bird News from Trevor Riddle

## May

The warbler species arrived in about average numbers (although Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs seemed particularly numerous) but Swallows and House Martins came in late and in low numbers and even by late May there were fewer nesting pairs than last year. As usual a few Willow Warblers sang and moved on, but a Grasshopper Warbler on our Congresbury Moor Reserve for two days was a nice surprise. Similarly a Garden Warbler singing from a tiny bush in Wemberham Lane was quite unexpected.

A Cuckoo was heard regularly at Mendip Springs Golf Club and it did make a few forays to Congresbury Moor, whilst a Spotted Flycatcher at Cadbury Hill was only seen once. Four singing Song Thrushes along the Yatton section of the Strawberry Line was a good count; Wrens and Robins were all along the line. The count on the Congresbury section produced 20 Reed Warblers, a record. Nearby Green Woodpeckers were yaffling: a Great Spotted Woodpecker was feeding noisy young in Littlewood. Skylarks were singing on Kenn and Congresbury Moors.



*Cuckoo on the Strawberry Line, 27th May 2021.*

## June

Peregrines returned to perch on pylons: possibly failed breeders although the species has enjoyed another productive year in North Somerset. Three Song Thrushes were feeding young in Wemberham Lane - they are increasing steadily locally.

The bird of the month was a Short-eared Owl on Kenn Moor, an astonishing record. This was the first Short-eared Owl I have seen locally in 40 years. The British Trust for Ornithology has satellite-tagged a few 'shorties' and has discovered that some make incredibly long journeys in the breeding season and this bird may have been on just such a journey. A couple of Red Kites passed over the Horsecastle area of Yatton on the 13th and two Yellowhammers were singing in the Brockley area.



*Reed Warbler on the Strawberry Line*

*Photos by Mark Savage*

## July

Congratulations to our friends at NEWT - Nailsea Environment and Wildlife Trust - who had broods of Kestrels and Barn Owls on their reserve. Continuing on the subject of Owls, three Tawny young were reported from Cadbury Hill. And staying on the raptor theme two separate sightings of Hobbies raises hopes of nesting locally. Something to look out for in August.

Skylarks were still singing at the beginning of the month, with a few Reed Warblers and Whitethroats still vocal after mid month. These species like the Swallows try to raise two or three broods. Good numbers of young Swallows started to appear mid month raising hopes that a good number will be available to head off to Africa in September. Research shows that only 30 percent of the birds that leave us in the Autumn return the following Spring. Each pair needs to raise four young to maintain the population. Many species of birds are now finishing breeding and will disappear from view as they undergo their moult.

Please keep your bird observations coming. Contact: [birds@yacwag.org.uk](mailto:birds@yacwag.org.uk).

*Trevor*

## Wild World Heroes - Summer Reading Challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge is an annual event to encourage children aged 4-11 to read for pleasure. This year's theme is [Wild World Heroes](#), inspiring children to stand up for the planet. Our local libraries are supporting and promoting the challenge, and children can pick up a pack and borrow books to read for the challenge from their local library. The challenge runs from 10th July to 11th September. There are prize draws for children participating and YACWAG has been pleased to support the Summer Reading Challenge this year by providing a prize at both Yatton and Congresbury libraries of an RSPB Spotters' Clipboard, bird guide and erasable pen.

The theme offers a great opportunity for children to learn more about the natural world and environmental issues, including how they can take action to look after nature. Local libraries will be stocking and promoting books about nature and conservation during the whole of the reading challenge period.

In Congresbury library children will find things to do, like a mini-beast hunt. Photos of children's wild discoveries can be shared on the Congresbury Community Library Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/227677735499715>.

Outdoors there will be a Wild World Heroes nature treasure hunt along the Strawberry Line from Yatton to Congresbury (or Congresbury to Yatton) for children and families to take part in during August, with prizes to be won. Children will hunt for a list of items and photograph the matching wildlife on the Strawberry Line or elsewhere. They (or their parents) can then upload their photos to the YACWAG Facebook group.

Thanks to Meriel, Jo and Sue for organising YACWAG's contribution to the reading challenge.

More volunteers are needed to help YACWAG continue to participate in community activities. As well as the benefits to the charity in having its name associated with community events, spreading the message that there are local people involved in nature conservation is vital. Please consider how you can support us in this way.



### LOVE CLEEVE

YACWAG will be at a family event in Claverham Village Hall on Saturday 4 September 10-12 at an event designed to help people find out how to live more sustainably. The

Cleeve community event includes walks, films, talks, demonstrations, puppet show, cream teas, pop up cafe, film shows and music as well as a special eco-church service.

For more information and to book events, see [www.lovecleeve.co.uk](http://www.lovecleeve.co.uk).



## Mrs Hutchinson - The Lady Lepidopterist

*Meriel Harrison shares an article she wrote about Emma Hutchinson and her work to save the comma butterfly.*

The annual [Big Butterfly Count](#) coordinated by Butterfly Conservation is underway, and you can submit results on their website for as many 15 minute counts as you like until 8th August. You can do your counts in your own garden, or out and about in other places too. From the results so far, many of us are seeing comma butterflies in our local area. A few years ago I was doing some research into natural history in Herefordshire, and found out about Emma Hutchinson and her study of the comma butterfly. Her story is an inspiring example of the difference one person can make to the fortunes of an entire species.

Herefordshire, in the 1880s. As autumn approaches, a vicar's wife sits at her writing desk and begins to draft a series of letters. She knows that soon the local farmers will be stripping the spent hop vines from their regimented trellises, cutting them down to the crown in readiness for next year's spring. Mrs Hutchinson is driven by an obsession, and it is one that will ultimately pull a species back from the brink of extinction. The object of her obsession is the comma butterfly.

Mrs Hutchinson was born Emma Sarah Gill in the small village of Llyswen, which sits beside the River Wye in Breconshire. In 1832, at the age of 12, she moved with her parents some 33 miles north-east, crossing the border into England. There she became Emma Hutchinson when she married Thomas Hutchinson, vicar of Kimbolton, near Leominster, in 1847. They settled into Grantsfield, a large and comfortable farmhouse of warm pinkish sandstone with touches of the half-timbering so characteristic of north Herefordshire villages. Here they would raise their seven children; and here, the first seed of interest sown when her 5-year-old son (also named Thomas) caught a swallow-tailed moth, Emma would undertake her painstaking and life-long study of the local lepidoptera.



She kept records of dozens of species – in the garden at Grantsfield alone, she caught four moth species not recorded in Herefordshire since – but her greatest contribution to entomology was made through her extraordinary skill in rearing larvae. In *The Aurelian Legacy* by Salmon *et al*, the rare photograph above of Emma appears: body sombrely cloaked and hair severely parted in the Victorian fashion, nonetheless a wide compressed smile spreads beneath her high cheekbones, and her eyebrows are arched with mirth. It is as if she has seen the photo caption describing her as an “indefatigable breeder”; a touch personal, perhaps, she thinks. But we know what they mean; for four decades before her death she raised brood after brood of the pinion-spotted pug moth, “splendid” to Emma if rather drably grey to the casual observer. The other focus of her breeding programme was the comma butterfly, and her close attention would be rewarded with unprecedented insights into its life and habits.

When encountered with its wings closed, the comma is unprepossessing. Its underwings are stained to varying shades of mottled tea and tobacco, their ragged and darkened edges reminiscent of an old treasure map salvaged from fire just in time. When the wings open, the flame is revealed: glowing shades of amber orange, stippled into tortoiseshell by striking black dabs. Its Latin name is *Polygonia c-album*, the angle-winged butterfly with the white 'c'. The 'c' is the comma of its common name, small but distinct upon the lower portion of the underwing. It is known to feed upon a few select species: nettle, currant, elm, willow, and – crucially – hop. During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century its population crashed, with the blame laid at the door of the decline in hop farming, and particularly the practice of burning the bines (a harbour for the pupae, disguised as withered leaves) in autumn.

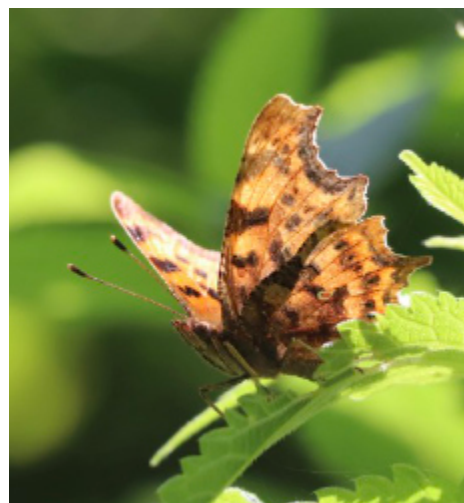
The remaining stronghold of the species was hop-rich Herefordshire, and Emma Hutchinson was serendipitously placed. Pressing into service her local connections, she cajoled friends and acquaintances into rescuing the chrysalises and tufted caterpillars from the hop yards and bringing them to her to breed on. She sent out hundreds of parcels of caterpillars, ready for release, to her wide web of correspondents: enthusiasts, collectors and eminent naturalists. The comma survived, and today it thrives throughout England; it is one of the lucky species thought to be benefitting from the effects of climate change.

One of Emma's only publications was *Entomology and Botany as a Pursuit for Ladies*, in which she argued that rather than simply collecting – a pursuit best left to men – ladies should properly concern themselves with studying the habits of butterflies. Taking this approach she was the first to observe that the comma butterfly could be double-brooded, and that the different generations were distinguishable by their colour. Caterpillars raised in spring would develop golden-brown underwings and breed again that summer, while those raised later in the year would develop darker brown underwings to provide camouflage through the winter. The paler springtime individuals are known as *var. hutchinsoni* in her honour.

After her death in 1905, an obituary in an entomological journal noted that, "Though too unobtrusive, Mrs. Hutchinson takes quite a first place amongst the lady entomologists of recent years... it is to be regretted that she has left record of so little of her knowledge". So little record, perhaps; but so much legacy. Her seven children all became naturalists, her son Thomas a noted lepidopterist in his own right. Her collection of some 20,000 specimens, neatly labelled and catalogued, sits in the Natural History Museum. And every summer, thanks to Emma Hutchinson, all over England there are flashes of burnished copper as comma butterflies take to the wing.



*Comma from Mrs Hutchinson's collection (1902)*  
Natural History Museum



*Comma var. hutchinsoni Littlewood*  
photo Tony Moulin 2021



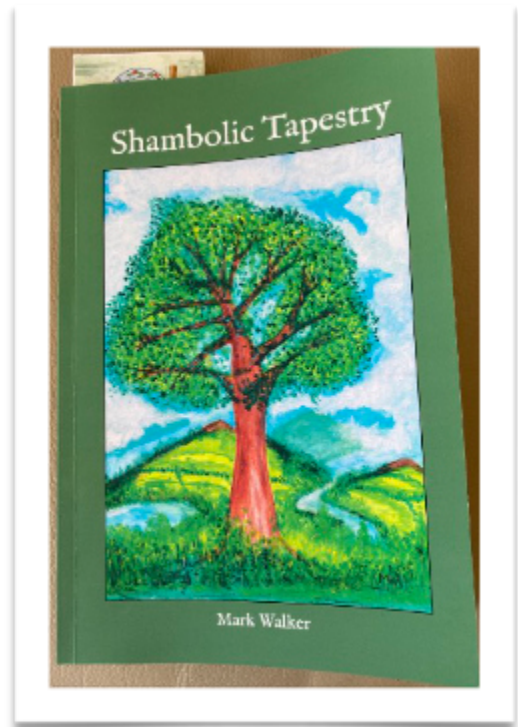
## Shambolic Tapestry by Mark Walker

This new, unique and thought-provoking book has been written by local garden designer, horticulturist and nature lover, Mark Walker. Mark will generously donate £1 from every book sold to YACWAG, and I am sure this is a book that will interest many YACWAG members.

Shambolic Tapestry is a leisurely hike through time and the British landscape through the eyes of three tree characters, the oak, the ash and the hazel, who each describe their experiences with humans throughout history. Mark shares his own life-story within the threads with inspiration from his love of Cadbury Hill. More than a history book, more than a memoir, written with a fresh perspective, Shambolic Tapestry weaves together fact and fiction in unexpected ways, educating and informing the reader as it develops.

To pre-order your copy at £10 email [tentorsgardening@gmail.com](mailto:tentorsgardening@gmail.com) or text 07886 185853.

*Faith Moulin*



## A New Normal?

So, at the time of writing the pandemic seems to be on the back foot in England and those of us with a double dose of vaccine are breathing a sigh of relief and going back to normal. Or are we?

YACWAG has been re-evaluating its activities for many different reasons, Covid19 being just one of them. The committee having learnt new tricks in the form of organising talks via Zoom instead of setting out uncomfortable chairs in draughty village halls, this winter YACWAG members will be able to enjoy local speakers on a range of wildlife topics from the comfort of their own homes. This is 'building back better'! No-one is excluded. Communities in both Yatton and Congresbury can attend more easily and speakers are really appreciating the change too.

In the last newsletter you heard that YACWAG's administration was about to change after the retirement of two of our key founding Trustees. This has created a bit of a hiatus but it also presents the opportunity to consider new ways of doing things. Our website, as you will have read, is a key part of this change. Thirty years ago Tony and I were inspired and rocked by the idea that we could 'think globally, act locally'. That message is even more important today. With social media and constant negative news reporting on television and radio, it is easy to sit back and think there is nothing we can do, our contribution is too small to count. Nothing is further from the truth and I will offer you a few challenges on the next page.



*Green thick-legged flower beetle*

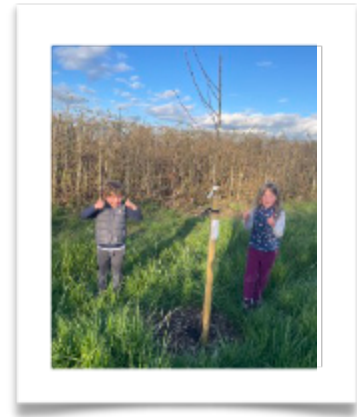
## Get Connected with Nature

### **Dig a Pond - don't worry if it is tiny.**

Tony wrote in this issue about dragonflies he observed in our garden pond. Are you worried about the state of nature? If you love it you will want to care for it, connect with it. I can recommend a garden pond as a way of connecting with nature and giving local species a helping hand. (No goldfish though!)

### **Water a Newly-Planted Tree**

More than a dozen YACWAG members are watering new fruit trees in dry weather, both at Hangstones and at our new Kenn Moor orchard. I have been astonished at the number of people thanking US for the opportunity to contribute to this project. It has been such a relief to know essential watering is being done and that it hasn't depended on the efforts of too few.



### **Lead a Workparty**

Times have changed since YACWAG started 20 years ago. Bramble bashing in an ecological emergency no longer seems the right thing to do. Slash and burn is out of fashion - except in the Amazon. YACWAG does have occasional practical jobs that need doing sometimes and the occasional task that needs a crowd. (Tree planting and after-care at Cobthorn Reserve will be one of them.) But most of our original volunteers for such work are now in their sixties and seventies and, critically, we have no volunteer organiser and leader.

### **Wear Your Support on Your Sleeve**

If you can't be active yourself you can still model clothes with a YACWAG logo. Our current supplier uses ethical organic and fair-trade cotton and our logo is embroidered rather than plastic and states Nature As Your Neighbour since 1999. The baseball caps are made of 100% recycled material and at £10.50 are a bargain for shading your eyes in the bright sunshine.

Talk to your own human neighbours about YACWAG. If we all signed up one new member a year YACWAG membership would grow like mad.

### **Are You Good at Admin? Ideas? Chatting to People?**

YACWAG has a number of one-off admin tasks waiting for you to volunteer. Can you write (e.g. an article for the newsletter), make posters? Are you full of ideas for how YACWAG should be interacting in the community? Do you like socialising? would you like to organise a meeting of members, or a walk? Do you use social media? Please contribute to YACWAG's feeds. Share your photos.

All these things will support YACWAG, and that will help us do more for our local environment. One thing has become obvious in the last year: YACWAG needs you; nature needs you. Please don't be shy. If you want to get involved at any level with the best local wildlife charity there is, please step up.

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